IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claims 1-9 (Canceled).

Claim 10 (Currently Amended): A method of preventing or reducing the formation of gas hydrates in a liquid or a gas comprising adding, as a gas hydrate inhibitor, a solution or dispersion of copolymers ~~composed of~~ comprising

from 40 to 99.5% by weight of at least one ethylenically unsaturated lactam A,

from 0.5 to 60% by weight of at least one C_4 to C_8 alkyl (meth)acrylate (monomer B) having a water solubility of less than 10 parts by weight of monomer in 100 parts by weight of water at 21°C, and

from 0 to 50% by weight of other monomers C

~~to solvents~~ in a solvent having a flashpoint greater than 50°C ~~forming a gas hydrate inhibitor and adding the gas hydrate inhibitor~~ to [[a]] said liquid or gas.

Claim 11 (Previously Presented): The method according to claim 10, wherein the copolymer is composed of

from 60 to 99% by weight of lactam A,

from 1 to 40% by weight of monomer B, and

from 0 to 39% by weight of monomer C.

Claim 12 (Previously Presented): The method according to claim 10, wherein the proportion of the monomers C is less than 5% by weight.

Claim 13 (Previously Presented): The method according to claim 10, wherein the lactam is N-vinylpyrrolidone.

Claim 14 (Currently Amended): The method according to claim 10, wherein the copolymer is prepared by solution polymerization in ~~solvents~~ a solvent having a flashpoint greater than 50°C.

Claim 15 (Previously Presented): The method according to claim 10, wherein the copolymer has a K value of from 10 to 100, measured in 5% by weight ethanol solution at 21°C.

Claim 16 (Canceled).

Claim 17 (Currently Amended): The process according to claim [[16]] 10, wherein the ~~liquids or gases are~~ liquid or gas is mineral oil or natural gas.

Claim 18 (Currently Amended): A solution of copolymers which has a K value of from 10 to 45 in 5% by weight ethanol solution at 21°C comprising,

from 40 to 99.5% by weight of at least one ethylenically unsaturated, cyclic lactam A,

from 0.5 to 60% by weight of at least one C_4 to C_8 alkyl (meth)acrylate [[of]] (monomer B) having a water solubility of less than 10 parts by weight of monomer in 100 parts by weight of water at 21°C, and

from 0 to 50% by weight of other monomers C

in ~~solvents~~ a solvent having a flashpoint greater than 50°C.

Claim 19 (Currently Amended): The method as claimed in claim 10, wherein the at least one ethylenically unsaturated lactam A is selected from the group consisting of cyclic lactams, noncyclic lactams, ~~vinylactams, N-vinylamides, N-vinyl-N-methylacetamide, N-vinylcaprolactam, N-vinylpyrrolidone~~ and mixtures thereof.

Claim 20 (Previously Presented): The method as claimed in claim 10, wherein monomer B is selected from the group consisting of n-butyl-acrylate, 2-ethylhexyl acrylate and mixtures thereof.

Claim 21 (Previously Presented): The method as claimed in claim 10, wherein monomer C is selected from the group consisting of hydroxy(meth)acrylates, (meth)acrylamide, (meth)acrylonitrile, (meth)acrylic acid or salts thereof, acrylamidomethylpropanesulfonic acid or salts thereof and mixtures thereof.

Claims 22-24 (Canceled).

Claim 25 (Currently Amended): The solution as claimed in claim 18, wherein the at least one ethylenically unsaturated lactam A is selected from the group consisting of cyclic lactams, noncyclic lactams, ~~vinylactams, N-vinylamides, N-vinyl-N-methylacetamide, N-vinylcaprolactam, N-vinylpyrrolidone~~ and mixtures thereof.

Claim 26 (Previously Presented): The solution as claimed in claim 18, wherein monomer B is selected from the group consisting of n-butyl-acrylate, 2-ethylhexyl acrylate and mixtures thereof.

Claim 27 (Previously Presented): The solution as claimed in claim 18, wherein monomer C is selected from the group consisting of hydroxy(meth)acrylates, (meth)acrylamide, (meth)acrylonitrile, (meth)acrylic acid or salts thereof, acrylamidomethylpropanesulfonic acid or salts thereof and mixtures thereof.

Claim 28 (New): The method according to claim 10, wherein the solvent is ethylene glycol.

Claim 29 (New): The method according to claim 10, wherein the solvent has a flash point greater than 100°C.

Claim 30 (New): The method according to claim 29, wherein the solvent is 1,2-ethanediol or 1,2-propanediol.

Claim 31 (New): The solution as claimed in claim 18, wherein the solvent is ethylene glycol.

Claim 32 (New): The solution as claimed in claim 18, wherein the solvent has a flash point greater than 100°C.

Claim 33 (New): The solution as claimed in claim 32, wherein the solvent is 1,2-ethanediol or 1,2-propanediol.

Claim 34 (New): The method as claimed in claim 20, wherein the lactam is N-vinylpyrrolidone.

Claim 35 (New): The solution as claimed in claim 26, wherein the lactam is N-vinylpyrrolidone.

Claim 36 (New): The method as claimed in claim 19, wherein the lactam is a noncyclic lactam.

Claim 37 (New): The method as claimed in claim 36, wherein the noncyclic lactam is an N-vinylamide.

Claim 38 (New): The method as claimed in claim 37, wherein the N-vinylamide is N-vinyl-N-methylacetamide.

Claim 39 (New): The method as claimed in claim 19, wherein the lactam is a cyclic lactam.

Claim 40 (New): The method as claimed in claim 39, wherein the cyclic lactam is N-vinylcaprolactam or N-vinylpyrrolidone.

Claim 41 (New): The solution as claimed in claim 25, wherein the lactam is a noncyclic lactam.

Claim 42 (New): The solution as claimed in claim 41, wherein the noncyclic lactam is an N-vinylamide.

Claim 43 (New): The solution as claimed in claim 42, wherein the N-vinylamide is N-vinyl-N-methylacetamide.

Claim 44 (New): The solution as claimed in claim 25, wherein the lactam is a cyclic lactam.

Claim 45 (New): The solution as claimed in claim 44, wherein the cyclic lactam is N-vinylcaprolactam or N-vinylpyrrolidone.